

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ARA-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05

ACDA-07 MC-02 /094 W

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R 111137Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1558

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 0269

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, SG, IV

SUBJ: FRANCO-AFRICAN DAKAR CONFERENCE:

DEFENSE COORDINATION

REF: A) STATE 002032, B) ABIDJAN 001 (NOTAL)

C) 76 DAO ABIDJAN 346 (NOTAL)

1. AS REPORTED REFS (B) AND (C) AND ELSEWHERE, THE SOVIET CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA HAS BEEN A MAJOR SOURCE OF CONCERN TO THE GOIC IN THE YEAR SINCE ANGOLA. THE SOVIET-SUPPORTED VICTORY IN THAT COUNTRY IN THE FACE OF THE INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS (AS THE GOIC PERCEIVED IT) OF THE WEST TO REACT CAME AS A PROFOUND SHOCK TO IVORIAN
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LEADERS. HOUPHOUET WONDERED ALOUD "WHETHER WE WHO HAVE CHOSEN THE WEST HAD MADE A MISTAKE" AND FOREIGN MINISTER USHER TOLD OUR AMBASSADOR AT THE TIME THAT ANGOLA WAS CAUSING IVORY COAST TO REASSESS ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE USSR AND OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES.

2. ALTHOUGH THE INITIAL REACTION OF PANIC HAS SUBSIDED,

A DEEP CONCERN OVER WHAT IS SEEN AS A CALCULATED SOVIET PENETRATION OF AFRICA REMAINS. DURING AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE IN MAY, HOUPHOUET ISSUED WHAT HE CALLED A "CRY OF ALARM" TO THE WEST TO SHAKE ITSELF LOOSE FROM ITS TORPOR. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE PARIS MAGAZINE LE POINT (SEE 76 PARIS 12205) HOUPHOUET SUGGESTED THE SOVIET INTENTION WAS TO CUT EUROPE OFF FROM AFRICA, ITS TRADITIONAL SOURCE OF RAW MATERIALS, WHILE PROMOTING WITHIN AFRICA ITSELF THE INSTABILITY AND MISERY WHICH PROVIDE FERTILE GROUND FOR COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA.

3. THE THREAT CLOSEST TO HOME IN IVORY COAST EYES IS PROBABLY THAT OF GUINEA WHOSE FULMINATIONS DURING THE PAST YEAR HAVE WORRIED GOIC LEADERS MORE IN THE WAKE OF ANGOLA THAN SIMILAR ERUPTIONS DID IN YEARS PAST. THE FEAR IS THAT GUINEA MIGHT BE USED AS A BASE FROM WHICH TO CARRY OUT SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN NEIGHBORING STATES. SIMILARLY, ALTHOUGH THE GOIC HAS NEVER PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY (TO THIS EMBASSY) REFERRED TO IT, IVORY COAST MUST BE SOMEWHAT MORE NERVOUS IN THE POST-ANGOLA CONTEXT, AT THE SOVIET MILITARY LINKS WITH MALI ON ITS NORTHERN BORDER.

4. THE IVORY COAST REACTION HAS BEEN BOTH MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC. IN A PRIVATE VISIT TO PARIS IN NOVEMBER, HOUPHOUET REPORTEDLY EFFECTED THROUGH GISCARD D'ESTAING THE PURCHASE OF THREE OR FOUR ALPHA JETS AND DISCUSSED THE PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL MILITARY EQUIPMENT INCLUDING TANKS. A CONTINGENT OF THREE FRENCH-MANNED JAGUAR JETS

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MADE THEIR APPEARANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE IVORY COAST INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE IN DECEMBER. EARLY IN 1977 FOUR JAGUARS ARE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE IN IVORY COAST ALONG WITH APPROXIMATELY 50 ADDITIONAL FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL TO SUPPORT THE AIRCRAFT AND FLY THEM PENDING THE TRAINING OF IVORIAN PERSONNEL. CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AIRFIELD FOR THESE JETS IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY NEAR BOUAKE. MEANWHILE, THE 450-MAN FRENCH MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION REMAINS PERMANENTLY STATIONED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ABIDJAN. THE SECURITY SITUATION IN AFRICA WAS REPORTEDLY AMONG THE ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING THE UNUSUAL FLURRY OF SUMMIT MEETINGS BETWEEN HOUPHOUET AND PRESIDENTS MOBUTU OF ZAIRE, EYADEMA OF TOGO, KOUNTCHE OF NIGER, BOKASSA OF CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE AND BONGO OF GABON IN RECENT MONTHS.

5. PROSPECTS. THE STRENGTHENING OF IVORY COAST'S DEFENSE LINKS WITH FRANCE, ALREADY BEGUN, IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE THROUGH THE ACQUISITION OF ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT AND CLOSER MILITARY COOPERATION. THE PROPOSED MILITARY

BUILD-UP REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN GOIC POLICY WHICH UNTIL NOW HAS DELIBERATELY KEPT THE ARMED FORCES SMALL, SAYING THE NATION DID NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO WASTE ON ARMAMENTS. THE BUILD-UP WILL PLEASE THE ARMY WHICH HAS GRUMBED ABOUT INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT AND RELIANCE ON THE FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE ALTHOUGH THE LATTER IS LIKELY TO REMAIN A KEY ELEMENT OF IVORIAN DEFENSE POLICY SO LONG AS HOUPHOUET REMAINS ON THE SCENE. DIPLOMATICALLY HOUPHOUET WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO SENSITIZE HIS MODERATE FRIENDS TO THE PERCEIVED THREAT AND FOR THAT REASON HE WOULD WELCOME DISCUSSION OF DEFENSE MATTERS AT THE FRANCO-AFRICAN CONFERENCE IN DAKAR. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT HOUPHOUET IS LIKELY TO INVEST SIGNIFICANT FAITH OR RESOURCES IN DEFENSE LINKS WITH OTHER AFRICAN STATES, PREFERRING TO RELY ON AN AUGMENTED IVORIAN CAPABILITY AND, ABOVE ALL, THE CONTINUING FRENCH CONNECTION.

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